2013

HIST 143-17 America to 1865

Frank Rzeczkowski
rzeczkowski@xavier.edu

Follow this and additional works at: http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/history_syllabi_fall_2013

Recommended Citation
Rzeczkowski, Frank, "HIST 143-17 America to 1865" (2013). History Syllabi Fall 2013. 25.
http://www.exhibit.xavier.edu/history_syllabi_fall_2013/25

This Restricted-Access Syllabus is brought to you for free and open access by the History Syllabi 2013 at Exhibit. It has been accepted for inclusion in History Syllabi Fall 2013 by an authorized administrator of Exhibit. For more information, please contact exhibit@xavier.edu.
History 143-17
America to 1865
4:30-7:15 p.m. W, Hailstones 17
Fall 2013

Instructor: Frank Rzeczkowski  Office: Schott Hall 507
Email: rzeczkowskif@xavier.edu  Office Hours: M 1 to 3 p.m. and by appt.

The Basics: Beginning with the collision of European, African, and Native American peoples and cultures around 1492, this course surveys the experiences of people in what would become the United States until the end of the Civil War. The course emphasizes four interrelated themes: first, the question of identity (who am I and who are the people around me?); second, the question of belonging (who is included or excluded from my community/polity/society?); third, the question of order (how and by whom are rules regarding identity and belonging established and maintained – or defied and evaded?); and finally, the question of how liberty (or freedom) has been understood, defined, and applied at different times and in different places. The topics to be covered include the development of colonial societies, race relations and the origins of slavery, the American Revolution, the formation of a national identity, the era of reform, and the causes, course, and resolution of the American Civil War.

Format: This class meets once a week for 2 to 2½ hours. Typically, class meetings will include both lecture and discussion of that week’s assigned readings. You should have the readings done BEFORE the class meeting where they will be discussed. Attendance and participation in discussion is not optional; failure to participate will result in a lower discussion grade, and three or more absences from discussion will result in your receiving an ‘F’ in discussion. Since there is no textbook, attendance at lecture is also critical – the lectures will provide basic information essential for exams and papers, and provide context for the readings. I expect everyone to attend class regularly, to arrive on time and remain until class ends, to complete scheduled readings and assignments and be respectful of the instructor and your fellow students.

Grading: Your grade in this course will be determined by performance on exams, papers, and discussion according to the following criteria

2 of 3 short papers: 20 percent each
2 midterms: 15 percent each
Final exam: 20 percent
Discussion: 10 percent
Checkpoint assignments: SEE BELOW

Short Papers: There are three short papers listed in the course schedule; the first two papers are required; the third one is optional. If you are happy with your first two paper grades you may skip the third paper, or you may write all three papers and I will use the two highest paper grades in figuring your course grade. Each paper will be a 3 to 4 page response to a question I will hand out in class a week before the paper is due. Paper grades will be determined not only by the quality of the intellectual ideas they contain, but how well and effectively those ideas are communicated – clean and clear writing matters.

Midterms and Final Exam: Both the midterms and final exam will require you to answer short (4-5 sentence) ID questions and one essay question. Each exam will cover roughly the 1/3 of the course prior to the exam. All exams will require you to incorporate and synthesize information and evidence from lecture, readings, and discussion.

Discussion: This grade will be computed determined based on attendance and informed participation in weekly discussion.

Checkpoint Assignments: The checkpoint assignments are short weekly assignments based on that week’s reading. They are designed to help you engage with and understand the readings better in preparation for class discussion. There will be 10 checkpoints, graded on a pass/fail basis, over the course
of the semester. Individually they will not count towards your final course grade, but you must complete a minimum number of checkpoints in order to qualify for a certain grade at the end of the semester. In order to be eligible for an “A”, you must successfully complete (receive a passing grade on) at least 8 checkpoints. To qualify for a “B” you must successfully complete at least 6 checkpoints, and at least 4 checkpoints for a “C”. (NOTE: completing the required number of checkpoints DOES NOT guarantee you that grade; it merely makes you eligible for the grade determined by your other coursework.

NOTE: YOU MUST HAND IN A HARD COPY AND SUBMIT AN ELECTRONIC COPY ON CANVAS TO GET CREDIT FOR PAPERS AND CHECKPOINTS!

Academic Honesty: You are expected to produce original work on all assignments. Plagiarism or cheating will result in the student failing the course. Plagiarism means passing off another person’s words or ideas as your own without acknowledging the source. Direct quotes, paraphrases, or ideas taken from another source must be acknowledged with a parenthetical citation: for example (Dublin, Farm to Factory, 70). For more on academic honesty, consult the Xavier University Student Handbook.

Readings: The following books are required for this course and are available at the Xavier University bookstore:


Additional assigned readings are available electronically on the course’s Canvas page.

Part I: The Colonial Mosaic

Description: Prior to 1400, Europeans, Africans, and Native Americans had had little (if any) direct contact with one another. However, after 1400 shifts in European culture and society led to increasing contact and exchange, including the establishment of trade ties (including human trafficking) and European colonization in the Americas. These settlements provided new social, cultural, and economic opportunities for many people, but also produced conflicts between and among individuals and communities that in many cases led to legal, political, or economic stratification and subjugation, while colonial growth created new problems both for colonists and the peoples they had settled among.

Questions:
A. What were the key factors that shaped European interactions with Africans and Native Americans (and vice versa) from the 1300s to the early 1700s? How did these interactions affect the status of and attitudes towards people of other social, cultural, or ethnic groups (or of different geographical origins) during this time?
B. In what ways can the experiences and actions of English colonists in America during the 17th and early 18th centuries be understood as a search for stability? In what ways did the colonies become more stable - socially, politically, and economically - and in what ways did instability persist or even grow?

C. Explain the origins and patterns of European expansion in the Atlantic World after 1400, including a.) the factors that encouraged European expansion and discouraged that of other peoples during that time, and b.) the factors that shaped the forms that European expansion (economic and political as well as territorial) took. (Note: you may discuss events and processes prior to the 1400s in developing your answer.)

WEEK ONE
Aug. 28 – Introduction to course
Discussion: Causation, Evidence, and Inevitability
Reading: Columbus, “Letter to Sovereigns” (CANVAS “WEEK ONE” FOLDER)
CHECKPOINT #1 DUE

WEEK TWO
Discussion: Europe and America in 1500
Reading: Christian, Maidu, Skagit, Arickara, and Iroquois Origin Stories (CANVAS “WEEK TWO FOLDER)
CHECKPOINT #2 DUE

WEEK THREE
Sept. 11 - Fantasy and Reality on the Chesapeake/The Origins of Slavery
Discussion: Freedom, Property, and Race
Reading: Breen and Innes, Myne Owne Ground
CHECKPOINT #3 DUE

WEEK FOUR
Sept. 18 – The Puritan Identity Crisis/The Indians’ New World
Discussion: Puritans and Indians
Reading: Cave, The Pequot War
FIRST PAPER DUE

WEEK FIVE
Sept. 25 – Colonial Crises and Transformations/The Great Awakening
Discussion: The Original American?
Reading: Masur, ed, The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin
CHECKPOINT #4 DUE

WEEK SIX
Oct. 2 – MIDTERM EXAM

PART II: BECOMING AMERICA

Description: The American Revolution was as much a conflict between colonists (over the relationship between Great Britain and the colonies, appropriate forms of protest, and the wisdom of independence) as it was between colonists and Britain. These conflicts did not end after 1783, as newly independent Americans had to make decisions about exactly what being an “American” meant. Explosive growth in the early 1800s meant that America was in a constant state of flux, challenging people and groups to define themselves in a rapidly changing society.
Questions:
A. Even as America became more outwardly egalitarian in the early 1800s, racial and other boundaries in American society often hardened. Which dynamic – inclusion or exclusion – is more critical to understanding American history between 1780 and 1845? (Note: you may acknowledge trends in both directions, but build an argument for why one trend is more central than the other.)

B. Given that colonial society was becoming steadily more diverse (demographically, economically, and culturally) during the 1700s, how was a broad cross-section of colonists able to unite in political (and eventually military) opposition to British authority? What limits (if any) were there to colonial unity during the revolutionary era?

C. What were the main problems Americans faced in trying to create an ideal society and government after the American Revolution, and how did they attempt to address these issues? Answer with regard to one of two periods – 1783 to 1800, or 1800 to 1840.

WEEK SEVEN
Oct. 9 – Americanization or Anglicanization?/The Rhetoric of Liberty
Discussion: Revolutionaries
Reading: Slaughter, ed., Common Sense and Related Writings
AND
Hoerder, “Boston Leaders and Boston Crowds” OR Nash, “Social Change and the Growth of Prerevolutionary Urban Radicalism” (CANVAS “WEEK SEVEN” FOLDER)
CHECKPOINT #5 DUE

WEEK EIGHT
Oct. 16 – Declarations of Independence/The Constitution and the Failure of Virtue
Discussion: Self-Government
CHECKPOINT #6 DUE

WEEK NINE
Oct. 23 – The Origins of American Politics/Expansion and Egalitarianism
Discussion: Cherokee Nation/American Empire
Reading: Perdue and Green, The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears
CHECKPOINT #7 DUE

WEEK TEN
Oct. 30 – Removals/Revival and Reform
Discussion: Talking Back
Reading: Hinks, ed., David Walker’s Appeal
SECOND PAPER DUE

WEEK ELEVEN
Nov. 6 – The Jacksonian Revolution/The Stresses of Democracy
Discussion: Working Girls
Reading: Dublin, ed., Farm to Factory
CHECKPOINT #8 DUE

WEEK TWELVE
Nov. 13 – MIDTERM EXAM
Part III: Sectional Crisis, National Conflict

Description: The sectional crisis that led up to the Civil War was fueled by slavery, but also involved fundamental questions about the nature and shape of American society and government. Though the status of blacks in America itself was not initially implicated in the war by other side, African-Americans – both slave and free – forced both the United States and the Confederacy to confront fundamental issues of identity and belonging by 1865, leaving America poised on the brink of becoming the modern nation it would eventually become.

Questions:
A. In the mid-1800s, why did Northerners increasingly turn against slavery in the decades before the Civil War (even though most white Northerners did not support racial equality), and why did most white Southerners increasingly embrace and defend slavery (even though the percentage of white Southerners who actually owned slaves decreased in the decades before the Civil War)?

B. During the Civil War, both the North and the South claimed to represent “American” values and the legacies of the American Revolution. In a historical sense, which side had a better justification for making such a claim?

C. Even though African-Americans in both the North and the South generally did not possess political rights, how did they force Americans to confront the moral and legal implications of slavery, both before and during the Civil War? In what ways did blacks (both slave and free) set the stage for a fundamental transformation of American society after 1865?

WEEK THIRTEEN
Nov. 20 – National Expansion, Sectional Crisis/The World Made by Slavery
Discussion: Race and Slavery, North and South
Reading: Jacobs, Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl, ed. Fleischner
AND
Taylor, ed., Race and the City, “The Cincinnati Riot of 1841” (CANVAS “WEEK THIRTEEN” FOLDER)

CHECKPOINT #9 DUE

WEEK FOURTEEN
Nov. 27 – THANKSGIVING HOLIDAY, NO CLASS

WEEK FIFTEEN
Dec. 4 – The Birth of the GOP/Why The Rebels Lost the Civil War, Part I
Discussion: Rebels and Republicans
Reading: Earle, John Brown’s Raid on Harpers Ferry

CHECKPOINT #10 DUE

WEEK SIXTEEN
Dec. 11 – Why the Rebels Lost the Civil War, Part II/America in 1865
Discussion: What is Freedom?
Readings: Mississippi Declaration of Causes of Secession
Berlin, Free at Last (excerpt)
Fisk, “Plain Counsels for Freedmen”
McPherson, Lincoln and the Second American Revolution, ch. 3
(ALL CANVAS “WEEK FIFTEEN” FOLDER)

THIRD PAPER DUE
FINAL EXAM – 4:30-7:15 p.m., Dec. 18